

A Leap in the Knight

by Kalil

Category: Batman

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-04-29 09:00:00

Updated: 2002-12-01 03:35:25

Packaged: 2016-04-27 16:43:32

Rating: T

Chapters: 3

Words: 7,808

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Crossover with Quantum Leap: Sam leaps into the DC universe, and must figure out how that occurred.

1. Awkward Arrivals

Leap in the Knight

A Leap in the Knight

Part 1

By Kali

"Oh boy!" Sam Beckett was caught mid-swing, hanging by a relatively thin wire off of a 15 story building. Trying to get his bearings he wrapped the rope, wire, or whatever the hell it was, around his body forming a harness. "Al. Al?"

Feeling a little more secure he looked down at what he was wearing, a dark gray or black spandex suit, with a symbol of a bat on his chest. A long, dark cape flapped in the evening breeze. "Oh my God, I'm Batman!" _No, that can't be! He's a fictional character, a comic book character! It's got to be some nut case, who thinks he's Batman. That has to be it! _ "Al? Al!"

"Right here, Sam," Al answered. As he looked downward a wave of vertigo hit him. "Oh my God, Sam!"

Trying to ignore his fears, Sam managed to start swaying himself back and forth. Finally, he was able to reach one of the ledges on the building he was dangling off of. His heart pounding fiercely in his chest, he clutched to the bare concrete wall like a babe to a pacifier. Catching his breath he managed to point a shaking finger at the nearest window. "Anyone in there, Al?"

"I'll check." Al 'walked' through the concrete wall to see. A few agonizing seconds later. Seconds that seemed like hours to Sam. "All

clear."

"Good." Sam slowly reached down towards the belt on the bizarre Halloween costume. His fingers desperately grasping for something he could use to break the window with. He came up with something hard and metallic. Wrapping his right hand in the cape for protection against potential glass fragments, he swung the object hard. Nothing. He tried again, this time with a bit more oomph. A slight crack. Unfortunately, that minor victory came with consequences, he nearly lost his balance on his delicate perch.

"Sam! Be careful, that rope looks fairly strong, but I wouldn't take any chances."

"The sooner I get to mother earth's soil, the better." Another swing brings sweet victory. Or at least the sweet taste of getting off of the ledge, and away from the numbing feeling of vertigo. "Of all the situations I have leapt into, that has got to be one of the worst!"

Turning on the lights, Sam realized he was in an empty hotel room. Empty, but not vacant. A pair of black trousers and socks were strewn over a chair. A number of multicolored business shirts lay scattered unceremoniously on the king-sized bed.

He turned to look at the object in his hand, the one he had used to break through the glass. It was oddly shaped. Almost resembling a bat. "What is this?"

"A batarang. C'mon Sam, didn't you ever watch that old 60's TV series 'Batman' in reruns?"

Sam wondered why Al seemed to be regarding this seriously. As if he had actually leaped into.... No that wasn't feasible. He had leaped throughout the span of his lifetime. But always in the same dimension of reality. His reality. Not some fictitious one made up of the dreams, hopes, and ideals of others.

"'Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.' Well, at least you aren't."

"Any idea why I'm here?"

"Ziggy says that there is a 99% chance that you are here so that Batman....."

"Batman? You're kidding, right? You've got to be kidding. How is that even possible? He's a fictional character!" Sam spouted incredulous.

"Don't know. This is something right out of Ripley's," Al stated, scratching his head.

"Or the Twilight Zone."

"It sure looks that way, Sam. Anyway, according to Ziggy, there is a 99% chance that you are here so that Batman can fix a fatal virus that was hacked in through Ziggy's 'back door'."

"Ziggy doesn't have a 'back door'. I should know, I created her. I

programmed into her the ability to fight off any contingency."

"I'm afraid not in this case. We're not exactly sure when it started, but Ziggy's been spouting random gibberish at times. Including the theme song to 'Gilligan's Island'."

"Why him, and not me?"

"Three guesses."

"The swiss-cheese effect," Sam cursed. It denied him of so much. His memories, hopes, and dreams were all but fleeting images that always fell backwards too quickly into obscurity.

"Let's get out of here, Al."

"Sam, wait, don't you think you should, you know," Al said, pointing to the clothes lying on the bed.

Reaching down, he grabbed the trousers and attempted to put them on. They were unbearably tight. After a few attempts with the zipper, Sam hastily pulled them off. He looked around the hotel room for something less restrictive. As he entered the bathroom the reflection in the mirror caught his eye. He saw himself. Or in actuality, the man he had leapt into. Tall, well built, and muscular. And definitively, without a shadow of a doubt, dressed in a spandex batsuit. Reaching for the cowl, he slowly pulled it off. Revealing the hard, rigid features of the man beneath the masquerade.

"Definitively, not Adam West," Al quipped.

A noise from the other room, silenced any reply Sam was about to make. He quickly put the mask back in place. He had not wanted to be discovered, especially since he was not sure of how people viewed Batman, wherever the hell he was.

"What are you doing here?!" A woman, as weirdly garbed as he was, asked.

"According to Ziggy, that's Helena Wayne, also known as the Huntress. She's the daughter of Earth-2's Batman and Catwoman. 'Earth-2?' Oh God, this is weird, Sam. But, anyhow, she calls this world's Bruce Wayne, 'Uncle Bruce'. Apparently, technology allows her to travel back and forth between worlds."

"Helena."

"How dare you call me by that name! What right do you have? You've been trying to run me out of 'your' precious Gotham for several months! Just because I won't be a good little soldier girl, and tow the line. You arrogant piece of work! How the others put up with your domineering ways...."

"Or maybe not," Al said scrutinizing the hand held interlink's display. "This is.... weird, Sam. Now Ziggy's saying her name is

Helena Bertinelli, and no relation to Bruce Wayne"

"Possibly a result of that virus she's been infected with."

"What are you talking about?" a confused Huntress asked.

"Look," Sam started, struggling to come up with a cover story. Something to get him out of the hotel room, and out of the spandex. "Let me be succinct. I have somewhere to be. But I have to do it incognito. Without arising anyone's suspicions. To do that, I need some street clothes. Would you please help me locate some?"

"'Please'? Nightwing, is that you? I mean it has to be! Batman saying 'please'. That's got to be one of the signs of the Apocalypse!" she exclaimed, studying him closely. "Nope, wrong build. It's you all right. Your voice is slightly different, but it's you all right. Drat it all," She sighed. "Why don't you just have Oracle do that?"

Sam looked over at Al for an answer. He didn't disappoint.

"Oracle, also known as Barbara Gordon. Adopted daughter of James Gordon, the Commissioner of Gotham's police force. She was originally Batgirl until she was shot and crippled by the Joker. She's been paralyzed from the waist down, ever since."

"How?" Sam winced in regret, it was an idiotic question. The Huntress would realize the oddness of it, and become even more suspicious.

"Uh, through that trusty, comm-link of yours."

"It's broken," he said. A large beeping noise caused him to glance at his wrists. On it was something that resembled a digital wristwatch. "Well, it wasn't working a few minutes ago."

"You didn't get punched in the face one to many times, did you?"

"I don't have to explain myself to you," Sam stated sharply. Choosing the words carefully, trying to come off as cold and distant as she had earlier implied Batman to be with her diatribe.

"Whatever!" With that, she exited the way she entered. Leaving him alone with the beeping communicator.

Sam randomly pushed buttons, in an attempt to make contact. "Yes?"

"We have an emergency, Batman. Apparently there is a hostage situation in progress at Freya and Boon. Another domestic squabble gone wrong, I'm afraid. A man is holding his wife and three kids at gun point," Oracle replied. Her voice quivering slightly with repressed emotion.

Oh God, Sam thought. There was no way he could deal with this. He still felt somewhat shaky from his experience with the 'bat-rope'. How on earth would he explain that to her, without revealing the truth. Then it came to him, something Huntress had mentioned. "I'm afraid that I'm.... indisposed at the moment. What is the status of

the others?"

"Batgirl is busy cleaning up a brawl over at Lucky Strike. Way over on the other end of the city. Even if she could get there in time, she wouldn't know *how* to get there."

Huh, Sam thought. He looked over at Al for an explanation, but he just shrugged.

"Ziggy doesn't have any information on her."

Great, Sam mouthed.

"Azrael, he's currently assisting Leslie at her clinic. Nothing that can't wait. Do you want me to send him in?"

"Yes," Sam stated curtly. This time deliberately leaving out the 'please'.

"Alfred," Al blurted out. "Ask her to send Alfred to pick you up." He glanced down at the hotel room night stand, looking for the name of the establishment. "Outside of the Hotel Figuzzo."

Sam repeated the request to Oracle, informing her that he was too busy at the moment to do it himself. She seemed a bit puzzled by that, but nonetheless agreed to summon Alfred.

After the connection was broken. "Who's Alfred?"

"You don't know? Is your memory that swiss-cheesed? Sam, Alfred is one of the most well-known fictional butlers in literature. He's Batman's trusted confidant. He also raised Bruce Wayne after his parents were murdered. Since Bruce was 8.....uh, no... Wait a sec.... make that 6.... What the hell!" Al hit the hand-link on the side. "Now Ziggy's saying that Bruce was 10, when his parents were killed. This isn't good, Sam."

"Let's worry about that later. For now, lets get out of here!"

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2. Cover Up

A Leap in the Knight

Part 2

by Kali

"Ok, I think I'll need a map to find my way around this mansion. It'll look suspicious if Alfred finds me wandering around for hours trying to find the master bedroom."

"This is it, Sam. This Grandfather clock leads to the batcave."

"How do they activate the passageway?"

"I'm afraid I don't remember that part and Ziggy doesn't have any information on it either."

Alfred entered having parked the limo. "Master Bruce, I have left your dinner in the refrigerator. So unless you will be needing me, I shall return to Brentwood and Master Timothy."

"Before you go, could you to pull the file on..." Sam looked over at Al for assistance.

"Two-Face."

"On Two-Face."

"As you wish, Master Bruce."

"Al..."

"On it, Sam."

* * *

>"Got it. The secret trigger to the Grandfather clock passageway. As well as the computer password. Wait till you see the cave, Sam. It's impressive. Bats flying around. Giant souvenirs. A computer nearly the size of Ziggy, and that's just for starters!" <p>"Hopefully, there'll be a map to this place somewhere in it."<p>

"Shhh. He's coming, Sam."

"Here's the information you requested, sir."

"I'll go read it over in the library. If you'll excuse me Alfred."

"Certainly, sir. I'll just do some dusting before I go attend to Master Tim."

Sam hadn't expected Alfred to stay in the room. If he headed off in the wrong direction, it would look a bit suspicious to say the least. But, he had no choice, and started heading off towards a hallway to the east.

"Master Bruce? Are you feeling all right, sir?" Alfred asked.

"I'm fine. Why do you ask?"

"The library is in the opposite direction."

"Well, what can I say. This place is so big I... occasionally get turned around."

"You designed the new blueprints of the manor yourself."

"Wow, that's impressive!" Al exclaimed.

"Sir?" Alfred eyed him with concern.

Sam sighed. "I guess I can't pull one over on you. I've been mulling over some of my decisions as of late. I guess, I was just a bit distracted."

"Sir, I would be happy to stay here, if you need..."

"No, I want you at Tim's side right now. I think this is something that is better off handled alone."

"Very well, Sir."

"I've changed my mind. I think I'll head down to the batcave. I'll see you later."

* * *

>Alfred Pennyworth dialed a number he knew by heart. "Hello, sir."
<p>"Hey Alfie! I was just about to call you. I was wondering if you could whip up a picnic basket for me and Babs for this Saturday. Nothing too fancy, just some sandwiches, fruit, chips, and some wine."<p>

"Not a problem, sir. I take it things are progressing rather well between you and Ms. Gordon?"

"I'll let you know on Sunday. Alfred, is something wrong? You sound a bit concerned."

Alfred was dismayed that the young man could hear it in his voice. He always prided himself on his calm and collected manner. "Master Dick, I'm afraid that something is wrong. The master is behaving quite oddly."

"How?"

"He doesn't seem to know his way around the mansion. He's behaving peculiarly in other ways as well. I'm quite worried for him."

"I'll be there in 30 minutes."

"Much appreciated, sir."

* * *

>:Voice scan confirmed. Bruce Wayne. 95.0: <p>"Okay, this. Should this be happening? Should I be able to pass a voice scan? I mean my body is physically leaping. DNA evidence has supported that fact. So should I be able to fool this computer's analysis?" A worried Sam asked Al. Frown lines predominantly showed on his face.<p>

"Don't know, you've never been in this position before."

"But little kids and the mentally absent can see straight through the aura illusion, why not computers? What about Ziggy?"

"Our guest in the waiting room has been pretty close mouthed, so even if Ziggy was able to do a voice analysis, the results may not be accurate due to her current problems. And... and remember, Sam, you've performed as Elvis. You were quite good, if I do say so myself."

"I did?"

"You did. Too bad you're memory is so magnafluxed about that one. That leap was a real humdinger."

"Did I record anything when I was Elvis?"

"Not that I remember."

"Great! Are you sure you need him to help with Ziggy?"

"Well according to her, we do."

"What about Gushie?"

"He's trying, but he hasn't been able to locate the source of the glitch. According to Ziggy we need Batman's help to do that."

"But why him? Is it someone here that's doing the hacking? As insane as that sounds. Or could Lothos be behind it?"

"Lothos? Who's Lothos?" asked a young man with black hair who was also dressed in a strangely garbed way.

What is with these people and spandex? Sam thought to himself. But fortunately the man apparently hadn't heard any of his conversation with Al. Or had he? He hadn't even heard the boy approaching.

"That's Nightwing, also known as Richard Grayson, or Dick as his friends and family like to call him."

"Hello Dick."

"Bruce."

"He's Bruce's ward, essentially his foster son," Al said. Sam nodded, he had seen photographs of the young man up in the main house. "And... uh oh. Sam, I'll be right back. I have to go and check on something."

"So what can I do for you?"

"I wanted to talk about something."

"Anything in particular?"

"What we talked about last time."

Uh oh. Sam thought. _Best to let Dick lead in this conversation. Less chance of saying the wrong thing. _"Go ahead."

"I just wanted some clarification on what you said."

"I... thought I was perfectly clear."

"No... uh, well sorta. You told me you trusted my judgment."

"And I do."

"But that's all you said. You didn't tell me whether or not you think I'm spreading myself too thin with my work in Bludhaven, as well as with the Titans, and my other interests."

"What kind of relationship do these two have? They apparently don't communicate well with each other." Sam wondered. "Is there a problem?"

"Do you think I should cut back on something?"

"You should do what makes you happy. Only you know what your limits are, and when you have exceeded them. Just relax and go with the flow."

With that comment, Dick eyed Sam somewhat suspiciously. Bruce was behaving somewhat oddly. His posture was different. Less stiff. Less, well Batmanly.

"Sam, we have a problem. Our 'guest', he's well, he's gone." A worried Al stated.

Sam somehow managed to restrain himself from reacting to that in front of Dick. He simply walked past the young man, towards Al and mouthed 'How?'.

"He knocked out several of our staff members and security. We've locked down the project, but we fear he may have gotten out anyway. Apparently he didn't trust us, or believe what we were trying to tell him."

"Excuse me, Dick. I have to go... I have to go to the bathroom."

"Uh, sure, no problem. I'll just wait here."

Sam headed off to the steps leading to the main Manor entrance.

"Uh, Bruce... If you don't mind me asking. Why aren't you using the one in the cave?"

"The sink's clogged, and you know how Alfred is about proper hygiene."

"Yeah, I remember."

"I haven't told Alfred about the sink yet, so don't try using it."

"Okay."

After he exited the entrance he firmly shut the Grandfather clock behind. He looked all around to make sure Alfred wasn't milling about. Finally satisfied that he was alone, he renewed his conversation with Al.

"Well?" Sam asked.

"Well, the bright side is, it probably won't take him long to figure out he's not where he belongs. That he doesn't exist in our world,

and when he does, he should realize that he has no choice but to return to the waiting room." Al said.

"So you're just going to wait for him to come back?"

"No, we've started search parties out for him. Of course, it was a little tricky explaining to some of the newer, lower level security just why they were searching for 'Dr. Beckett'. They weren't here for the last time one of our 'guests' escaped. I'm just worried that some of the critics of Project Quantum Leap might use this against us, to try and shut down the project."

"I thought things had quieted down?"

"Almost, but just last month, we were audited."

"Awfully coincidental, isn't it? They could be behind the problem with Ziggy."

"Could be. They're trying to cut our funding."

* * *

>Dick Grayson sighed to himself. For all Bruce's brilliance, certain mundane things were beyond his grasp. Including minor plumbing problems apparently. He quickly picked up some Liquid Drain-o from Alfred's trusty supply closet and headed off to the batcave bathroom.<hr>Sam and Al reentered the Batcave. "Dick?" Sam inquired.

"Over here, Bruce. I'm in the training area."

The pair followed the sound of the voice to an area filled with various weight and exercise machines, bar bells, a trampoline, and to Sam's horror, a trapeze.

"I thought I could use a little practice. If you don't mind?"

"On that?" Sam asked pointing to the trapeze.

"Yep. It'll be just like old times."

"Uh... excuse me a moment. I have to go do something. I'll be right back."

"Okay," Dick Grayson commented. But Sam could tell that the young man was slightly concerned about 'Bruce's' behavior.

Sam quickly headed off towards another section of the cave. He hoped it would be far enough away, and isolated enough, that Dick couldn't overhear anything, without Sam seeing him first.

"It's okay, Sam. You've done it before."

"Really?"

"Yeah, you just don't remember. Don't worry, I'm sure it's just like riding a bike. Except you're hanging upside down from a trapeze."

"You can't be serious. You know how I feel about heights. If I did that on a leap, it must have been a matter of life and death, correct?"

"Well, yes."

"It's not in this case, so I don't care. There is no way I'm getting on that trapeze. If I drop him, he'll suspect something. If he doesn't already suspect that I'm not Bruce."

"If you keep on hanging over here in the corner, it's going to be a moot point."

"I know, I know. But I think that I have an idea."

"I hope it's a good one, Sam."

Sam with Al in tow reentered the training area of the Batcave. Dick had been working out on one of the weight machines. He stopped when he saw 'Bruce' approaching.

"Ready, Bruce?"

"Uh... now is not a good time, Dick," Sam said. He had scanned through the computer's criminal files in order to find a reasonable excuse. Quickly skim reading m.o.'s and to see whether they were loose or locked up. "I'm afraid I've been drugged with some sort of fear toxin."

"Why didn't you tell me about it earlier?" Dick asked.

"Didn't seem important."

"Scarecrow?"

"No, he's safely locked up in Arkham. But, whomever was responsible, drugged me with something that has made me afraid of heights. So until it wears off..."

"You'll have to avoid being Batman. Are you okay with that?"

"I'll have to be, won't I?"

"It's just that you never take time off, unless you're incapacitated. Or Alfred makes you take an enforced vacation."

"Sounds like you, Sam." Al commented. "You two may have more in common than we think."

* * *

>The driver's license in his pocket identified 'him' as Sam Beckett of Stallion Springs, New Mexico. No street address, just a post office box. The installation he had escaped from had clearly been military. Now he was stuck out in the middle of the desert with no clue as to how he got there. <p>He had wandered for hours, seemingly in a circle. The same familiar rock formations and cacti had kept on popping up. Could the miniature sandstorms have turned him around time and time again, he wondered. Finally he happened back upon a cactus he had marked with a section of his clothing. He was wandering

in circles, he realized to his horror.<p>

"Yoo-hoo! Over here!" A female voice yelled in greeting. He turned towards the direction it had come from.

Standing not 20 feet away from him was a pink patio table, with a purple umbrella shade. Sitting underneath was a smiling young blonde woman, with sapphire eyes, pouring ice water from a sparkling clear glass pitcher.

"Care for a drink, big fella?"

"You're not real. You're just a mirage."

":_:You were just a mirage, all of the time. Just a mirage, a trick of the mind:_ (1)," Emily sang in a haunting tone. "Nope, I'm as real as these grains of sand," she chimed as she spilled a fistful of sand onto the desert ground. "You know, I'm rather hurt that you don't remember me."

"Here drink some ice water, you look like you could use it." She handed him a crystalline goblet filled with water and shaved ice.

Bruce dipped a finger into it, and then pressed the same finger to his lips.

Emily gave a long drawn out sigh. "It's safe, really. Here, I'll show you." She grabbed the goblet back and took a long drink from it. "See, I'm not doubling over or anything! C'mon drink."

"Fine! Didn't want to do this, but you're leaving me no choice. I'll just have to unclog your mental facilities, so you can remember just who the hell you are, and just who the hell I am. We didn't think that 'swiss-cheese effect' would affect you, but, oh well," Emily said as she focused her telepathy on him. "There. Now do you remember me?"

"Yes, you were 'The Ghost of Christmas Past'."

"Cute, real cute."

"I'm afraid I don't have the time or inclination to deal with your 'requests' right now. As I'm sure you're well aware, crime doesn't stop to take a vacation. I have to be on my toes at all times. Any outside... investments would only complicate matters far beyond feasibility. So if you would please return me home now."

"Um... yeah, you're absolutely right. You shouldn't get a life. I mean how selfish of you to do that. Firefighters, well, they shouldn't date or have a family. Neither should police officers, or soldiers, or government agents, or ... "

"You'll never give up will you?"

"Nope, not until there is no more breath in your body."

"Or yours."

"Oh, I think I'll be outliving you. You can bet your batsuit on it."

But... we need to focus on the matter at hand. You need to return to the Project center. There's a 'project' you have to complete. Oh, and by the way, this isn't your home world. So the only way you're going to get home is to go back there"

"I thought you and your... 'friends' were behind this!"

"Not exactly. We just took advantage of a bad situation. But in a good way."

"What do you want? Why am I here?" Bruce asked. A frown etched on his face.

"Boy, you are the epitome of serious to the extreme. Didn't anyone ever tell you that your face could freeze like that? No? Well it can, you should smile more, it takes less facial muscles too."

"I asked a question. I want an answer."

"A child's well being is at stake. An unusual child, but a child nonetheless. And she needs your expertise to save her."

"What can I do, that you can't?"

"We're not allowed to interfere in this matter."

"Uh, it seems to me you are interfering in this matter."

"We're not allowed to directly interfere in this matter. It would violate our 'treaty' with certain outside parties. But insuring that a certain detective is in the right place at the right time, well, that falls into the convenient loophole section of the equation."

"And this child, she's back at that installation?"

"Yes."

"How will I find her once I get back there?"

"Oh, don't worry about that. They'll take you directly to her."

"They already expect me to save her?"

"Yes, because she told them you could."

"And how could she possibly know that? How could she possibly know about me?"

"Because Billy told her all about you. She's thinks you're rather fascinating. A study in literal contradictions. You also remind her of her father to some degree."

"Fine, I'll do it, Emily. Emily?" He turned around to discover she had disappeared. However, he noticed a handy arrow sign somehow etched into the ground. "Cute, very cute," he muttered to himself. He picked up the goblet of ice water and headed off in the direction the arrow pointed to.

* * *

>:Is everything proceeding as planned: <p>"Yes, Zoey has everyone quite convinced that she is their trusted compadre. By the time they figure out the truth, it'll be far too late to do anything about it."<p>

:And Dr. Beckett:

"He'll be lost in time. A nuisance to us no longer."

(1) The verse Emily sang is from the song "Mirage", written by Jordan and Pfrimmer, and performed by Sylvia on her "Just Sylvia" album. It reminds me of Bruce's playboy image (As well as what happens when he sees the batsignal during a date). :-)

****Authors Note: ****This story takes place in the same continuity as "_Spectres" and "What Could Have Been".__

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3. Getting Down to Business

****A Leap in the Knight****

****_Part 3_****

****_By Kali_****

"Wow! He's back!" Al exclaimed happily. "Call off the search party!" Al told a man dressed in a white uniform.

"Yes, sir."

"Government?" Batman said as he watched the exchange. It was more a statement than a question.

"Yeah, more or less," Al nodded. He was relieved that Batman had returned of his own violation. It made things so much simpler, and less dangerous, for all involved.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Batman, sir!" Guchi exclaimed, holding out his hand in greeting. Bruce ignored it, and headed towards the main computer console.

"Is this the patient?" Bruce asked plainly.

"Yes, how did you?!" Al wondered in amazement.

"It's a computer."

"Uh huh. Her name is Ziggy."

"A computer with a name, of course."

"And a personality. You wouldn't believe some of the stunts she has pulled. Why she has....."

"I'd like to get on with this, if you don't mind," Batman stated. It wasn't a request.

"Sure. Guchi, over there, can help you with whatever information you need."

"And where will you be?"

"I'll be..... I'll be in the imaging room. Remember the room I showed you earlier?"

"Yes."

"That's how we keep in contact with Dr. Beckett."

"Who right now is going around in my body?"

"No. Actually, you're bodies switched during the leap."

"....."

"Yes, well, can you help her?"

"I'll try."

"Great! I'll let Sam know!"

"You know, for a complete stranger, you sure know a lot about what is going on. Mind telling us why?" Samantha asked warily eyeing him with suspicion.

"Aw, don't worry about it, kid. He's helping us," Al commented cheerily.

"Maybe. But with Ziggy in her current condition, we're in a very vulnerable spot. I don't think it would be a mistake to err on the side of caution, do you?"

"True," Al nodded in agreement. "But..."

"If you think that I intend on telling you anything...." Bruce growled coldly at Samantha.

"What? Mr. Way..., " Al began then noticed Bruce's harsh glare. "Batman, everyone in this room wants the same thing."

"Are you sure about that?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Al asked as his eyes narrowed in fear. He had his suspicions, but surely those couldn't be right. It couldn't be them, could it? "Are you saying, what I think you're saying?" Al asked as he looked warily back and forth between Samantha and Bruce.

"Yes, she's not who she says she is."

"What?! How?! You just walk in here, and ten minutes later you figure out that I'm a leaper?"

"A "leaper", " Bruce mused grimly to himself, then added, "The surveillance tapes of the building. I looked through them a bit before meeting you and everyone else."

"How?!"

"The way "you" walk, talk, your demeanor and mannerisms all suddenly changed two days ago according to the tapes. I thought at first that it might be due to the stress of the situation. But, upon observing "you" firsthand, I realized else wise."

"I'll have to remember that, in the future."

"Get the hell out of Sam's daughter!" Al yelled.

"Sam's daughter, huh? That shouldn't be possible." Zoe commented with faux amazement.

"Oh, please. You knew. That's why you picked her to leap into. Now leave, or else I'll..."

"What? Yell at me until you choke? You can't do a thing to hurt this body. You won't. And I seriously doubt that Batman would throttle an innocent to get to me. On the other hand, I can do all sorts of "fun" things to her. Regardless, I'm not leaving just yet. The job isn't finished."

"Oh, I'd disagree. You'll be leaving very shortly," Emily hissed.

"What?" Zoe turned to see a teleportational haze of sand falling to the floor, as a woman walked out of it.

"You keep working on that. I'll keep her busy."

Batman nodded and turned his focus back to the computer.

"Oh, fancy meeting you here. I heard you were "retired" by proxy?"

"Yeah, it's just funny how things work out, sometimes. Isn't it?"

"Yes, but treaty breaking? Shame, shame," Zoe scolded with a fake frown. Then, with a smile she added, "Its almost like you did it intentionally."

"....."

"Oh, right. You were Shaw's favorite plaything, after all. Both genetically and... in other ways. Weren't you?"

"Shut up!"

"Why? Does it embarrass you?"

"I was a child!"

"Yeah. So now you're obsessed with "saving" other children."

"I'm not obsessed!"

"Oh, really? You got on him about not dating," Zoe said as she pointed towards Batman, as he flinched slightly. "Yet, you, yourself, have not dated ever since you "escaped" from Shaw. Hypocritical much?"

"That's different!"

"Oh, Bats, I wouldn't pay much heed to her. No. She's a major hypocrite in addition to having committed some pretty heinous acts in the past."

"Coming from a character witness, such as yourself, that mean a lot," Al commented snidely.

"You just love twisting things around, don't you?"

"It's a living," Zoe shrugged.

"Why? What's in your past that shaped you that way?"

"Nothing," Zoe shrugged again. "Unlike you, I don't blame others for my problems."

"Really, huh? Well let's just see about that, shall we?"

"What?!" Zoe exclaimed with a stricken look.

"Oh, I'm a telepath. Didn't you know? One of Shaw's little "gifts." And since I'm so ruthless and all... Well, let's just take a look-see inside your little ol' noggin and see what's what. You don't mind, do you?"

Zoe gurgled.

"Nah, didn't think so."

"Keep her busy. I think I have an idea how to fix the virus," Batman said.

"Great! I'll let Sam know," Al beamed.

"Sam? Sam?"

"Shhhh!"

"What?! Uh, Sam, no one else can see, or hear me, remember?"

"Except of course for little kids, the mentally disabled, and

animals."

"Yeah. Wait! Are you saying that one of them is in the vicinity."

"The way my lucks been going.... Unfortunately, some guy named Harvey Dent..."

"Two-face?!"

"Yeah. Well, he decided to pay his old friend Bruce Wayne a visit. Only, of course, he didn't see "Bruce Wayne," he saw me. And now... now the whole Justice League is after me."

"Oh, no. That's bad," Al grimly commented. While trying to come up with a possible solution to the problem, a thought occurred to him, "No wait, that's good!"

"Huh?!"

"Sam, one of the Justice League members is a telepath," Al began, then murmured, "At least he was in the comics. The point being is, he'll know that you're telling the truth!"

"Murphy's law."

"What?"

"Right after Harvey Dent popped by and declared that I wasn't Bruce Wayne, Dick asked me to go down to the cave and summoned this green Martian Gumby-look-alike to read me. Only, he couldn't read me."

"What?!"

"Some by-product of leaping."

"Interesting. Did you try explaining the situation to them?"

"For some inexplicable reason, no. I'm not sure why," Sam commented nervously.

"Some residual host influence?"

"Perhaps. Anyhow, I headed for the first bat-vehicle I could find, and got out of there."

"And they didn't try to stop you?"

"No, they didn't know. The telepath shape-shifted and he and Dick went upstairs to question Dent about me. I did hear them put out an APB on me. It was on the boat's radio. Right after they tried to remote control the vehicle back to the cave. Fortunately, it was programmed to obey Batman's voice command above all others."

"Maybe, your overreacting, Sam," Al said as he watched Sam warily look around at their surroundings. They were in a brightly lit room decorated with fanciful antiques and abstract paintings. "Is this one of Bruce's "summer" homes?"

"Yeah," Sam said with a shrug, "Didn't know where else to go. Most motels these days require a credit card, and I'm sure that they'll be keeping an eye out for any charges made using his card."

"True."

"So, how are things at home? Any progress with Ziggy and Batman?"

"Oh, that's what I came to tell you. He's back," Al beamed.

"Great!" Sam exclaimed, then noticed Al's brief worried frown, "What?"

"Well....."

"Well?' What's wrong, Al?"

"It's nothing. It's just..... Well, he keeps muttering something about 'Booster and Beetle', but other than that, he's agreed to help us," Al covered.

"Charges for a plane ticket and motel reservations for Stallion Springs, New Mexico. Do you think its significant?" Wally asked a pacing Dick Grayson.

"It's probably a ruse," Dick commented simply. His eyes narrowed in worry, "But why is he trying to mislead us? What's he hiding? And, most importantly, what happened to Bruce?!"

"When will the DNA testing be done?" Diana asked.

"Leslie said that it'll be done in a few hours. That'll let us know if we're dealing with a simple imposter or a more complicated imposter. Though, judging by what Two Face saw, Id lean more towards the latter than the former," Oracle responded over the computer link. "As it is, I haven't had any luck with identifying the man that J'onn saw in Two Face's mind. All of the databases have come up empty, so far."

"So, no criminal record. Could be military, government agent," Dick said as he rubbed his forehead in exhaustion.

"You think that Lex sent him?" Wally asked his friend with fearful apprehension. "Because if he did..."

"Then he could know *all* of our secret identities," Dick finished somberly. "I knew something was off about him. I should have done something about it!"

"Short pants, you are doing something about it!" Barbara chided. "Beating yourself up about it, won't help Bruce any."

"Yeah, Dick, for all we know, this guy could be from an alternate

reality or something," Wally began, then added, "Like that old doppelganger of you, that used to give us grief."

"Yeah, true. Just hope that he isn't as dangerous as "evil" me was."

"I'm not dangerous."

The various heroes turned abruptly to stare in astonishment at the all-to-familiar voice that had uttered those words.

"Um, so hi, guys," Sam said shyly as he gave a slight wave in greeting.

"Ooooooooookkkkkkkkkkkkkkkkaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyyyyyyyyyyyy. That is so definitely not Bruce," Wally murmured in amazement.

"Unless of course, Bruce's been inhabited by a pod person," Ollie commented as he stared at "Bruce".

"It's friendly. That's a good sign, right?" Plastic Man asked.

"Look, I'm going to tell you something. It's going to sound a little crazy, but I want you to hear me out," Sam began, then whispered to Al, "I really hope this wasn't mistake."

"Trust me, Sam. They're the good guys. They'll listen."

"Al, this isn't a comic book, things aren't so black and white in the real world."

"Sam, this sort of thing happens to them all the time and this ****is**** the "real" world. And.... Is that Wonder Woman?! Oh boy!"

"Al?!"

"Whom are you talking to?" Dick asked with concern as he wondered if the Bruce imposter was right in the head.

"You don't see him?" J'onn asked. "Here, let me show you," J'onn commented as he created a psychic link between himself and other heroes in attendance.

"Wow, you can actually see me. That is so... unbelievable! Wait till I tell Guchi and the others!"

"I think it is safe to say that he's harmless," Diana said as she eyed the both of them. Relief showing slightly on her face.

"Where's Superman?" Al asked..

"Out looking for him," Dick answered, pointing towards Sam. "Now, can we get to the explaining part? I'd like to know where Bruce is."

"He's where I originally came from."

"Originally?"

"Yeah, it's complicated."

"So you've said."

"I was a quantum physicist working on a project in New Mexico, when I discovered the key to Quantum leaping. Normally, I leap into different time periods and locations within my lifetime in order to help people. But things got a little screwy. This is the first time that I've leaped into a different reality."

"And this leaping is done by essentially possessing the bodies of other people?"

"No, not exactly. The people I leap into switch physically with me, we just end up superficially looking like the other," Sam corrected.

"So, Bruce is running around looking like you, but in his own body, on your world?" Oracle asked thoughtfully, as she pondered the complications of the situation.

"Yeah."

"How do you know this?" Dick asked.

"Uh, well, it's complicated," Sam blushed.

"He fathered a daughter while on one of his leaps," Al answered.

"Wouldn't something like that create a paradox?" Diana asked.

Al grinned flirtatiously back at her, "One would think that, but, it seemed to be destined. Sam kept on having to leap in and save her mother."

"And you are?" Dick asked Al.

"His guide," Al said with a smile. As he noticed the continued concern in Grayson's voice, he added, "Don't worry, I've talked to him, just recently. He's fine. He's helping us fight a computer virus. Our projects AI computer is experiencing an unusual computer virus caused by a hacker. When he's done with that, Sam should be able to leap out of here."

"A computer virus? Really?" Barbara asked intrigued. "Maybe I can help."

"Maybe you can," Al replied with a grin. "That's part of the reason why I asked Sam to come back here."

"I had the chance, the opportunity to change things for the better. But I...I" Barbara began despondently.

"There was nothing that you could have done. The repercussions would

have been wide spread. It was a no win situation," Sam reassured patting her on the shoulder.

"Says the man who alters the past as his way of life." she said tightly.

"Look, it's not that simple."

"Isn't it? Now every time I see Bruce,..... I feel guilty."

"Some things can't be changed. No matter how hard you try. Call it fate, if you will. But sometimes the best laid plans just never work out the way you want them too."

"You've had failed leaps?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes. Though that really depends on what I was sent to accomplish in the first place. But..... I've leapt into Lee Harvey Oswald."

"My God!"

"There was nothing I could do to change the fate of President Kennedy. It was beyond my power. Just like it was beyond your power to alter Bruce's life."

"Maybe. But, if you weren't there to save the president, then who?"

"As it turned out, I was there to save Jackie Kennedy."

"Any luck, you two," Al asked as he re-entered the room.

"Not yet. You?" Sam asked.

"Bruce is still working on it. He thinks that we can use me as a go-between. With J'onn "seeing" what is going on with Ziggy through my eyes, and relaying it to Oracle."

"Sounds like a plan. I'll go get J'onn," Sam responded as he headed up towards the cave entrance.

"He'll be in the kitchen," Oracle informed him.

"Oh?"

"Yeah, Alfred mentioned Oreos just before J'onn disappeared. Doesn't take a detective to figure out where he went."

"Ah, okay."

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